

The Knoxville Journal

AN INDEPENDENT NEWSPAPER
ESTABLISHED 1899
Knoxville 1, Tennessee

January 19, 1971

Mr. Bernard Fensterwald Jr.,
Fensterwald and Ohlhausen,
905 Sixteenth Street,
Washington D.C. 20005

Dear Mr. Fensterwald:

I apologize for not getting back to you sooner, although I'm afraid I have very little to add to your store of knowledge about Bowen-Osborne.

The full clipping of my article is attached, along with a copy of an interesting letter I received in response to the article. Also attached are copies of two memos from Steve Humphrey, retired associate editor of The Journal who recalled Bowen.

Humphrey's second memo refers to the reason for Bowen's departure as being related to alleged homosexual relations with a young boy. Fletcher Sweet, now with the University of Tennessee and a former Journal staffer, recalls Bowen was a "queer duck". Sweet also remembers that Bowen did his own typing at that time.

Carl Mathis, a city fireman, was a member of Bowen's Campfire Council and has numerous recollections: Bowen then (in the 1930s) had the reputation of being a homosexual, Bowen always had a lot of money to spend on the boys--quite unusual for the depression period, Bowen in meetings often told the boys his name was "John Sahib"--perhaps a throwback to his days in India. Mathis might be a good person for a more in-depth interview by someone with more knowledge of Bowen than I have.

I have not been able to determine the source of manner of delivery of the item which appeared in The Journal in November, 1963, announcing Bowen's trip to England. All aspects considered, I suspect the item was written either by Humphrey or our present city editor, Tom Sweeten, although neither can remember doing so.

Hal Stevens, director of the Knoxville Boys' Club, has some files relating to Bowen's Campfire Council which might be worth the time of someone on your committee to look over. They might provide leads on his sources of funds, etc. Again, my knowledge might be insufficient to spot significant information, although I would be happy to look them over if you see any benefit.

One of my staffers who had contacts in Sevier County, where Bowen supposedly spent some time during World War II, has been unable to turn up anything thus far. Sevier County, in addition to being a resort area (Gatlinburg and vicinity), was a hotbed of Nazi activity in the 1930s and 19 0s.

Another staffer, Tom Anderson, recalls Bowen as being rather harmless but publicity hungry and a constant promoter of fund-raising projects. A financially disastrous soccer match, involving some prisoners of war incarcerated near Gatlinburg, was among Bowen's projects.

I have found nothing about Bowen's political beliefs. And all of my discoveries so far indicate that many of Bowen's curious activities might have been related to his homosexuality. But then many Hitler henchmen were homosexuals.

I hope this information is helpful, and I would like to remain on your committee's mailing list. If I run across anything else of interest, I'll pass it along.

Sincerely,